

REMARKS

This is in response to the initial Office Action, mailed May 19, 2004, in relation to the above-identified patent application. In that Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 7, 9-26, 30, 32, 34, and 37 under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. Further, the Examiner rejected claims 1-12, 14-21, 23-33, and 37-42 under either 35 U.S.C. 102(b) or 103(a). Finally, the Examiner stated that claims 13, 22, and 34-36 would be allowable if rewritten to overcome any rejections under 35 U.S.C. 112, and to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

In response, Applicant has amended claims 1-8, 10-32, 35-40, canceled claims 9, 33, 34, 41, 42, and added new independent claims 43 and 44. In particular, independent claim 1 has been amended to include the limitations of allowed claim 34 and intervening claim 9, and to overcome any rejections under 35 U.S.C. 112. Accordingly, claims 2-8, 10-32, and 35-40 which depend from amended claim 1 are also allowable. New independent claim 43 has been written to include the limitations of allowed claim 13, and intervening claims 11 and 9. New independent claim 44 has been written to include the limitations of allowed claim 22, and intervening claims 18 and 9. Additional amendments were made to many of the claims in order to overcome any rejections under 35 U.S.C. 112, and to improve the clarity and readability of the claims.

Claims 1-8, 10-32, 35-40, 43, and 44 remain pending.

CONCLUSION

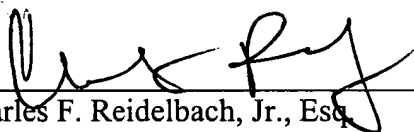
In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicant respectfully submits that all of the pending claims are in condition for immediate allowance. Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of the application and allowance of the pending claims.

If the Examiner feels for any reason that direct contact with the Applicant's attorney will advance the prosecution of this case to finality, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,

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